

THE NATIONAL SECURITY MEDAL

The early historical records of our country show recognition of the vital importance of obtaining accurate intelligence for guidance on matters of national interest. In this connection General George Washington in a letter to Colonel Elias Dayton, dated July 26, 1777, stated "The necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need not be further urged." A General Order issued August 7, 1782 at the headquarters of the Continental Army, Newburgh, New York provided that badges of distinction be conferred on veteran non-commissioned officers and soldiers and provision for the award known as the Badge of Military Merit or the Decoration of the Purple Heart was made by the following language:

"The General ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his soldiers as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit directs that whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings over the left breast the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk edged with narrow lace or finding.

"The road to glory in a patriot army and a free country is thus open to all. This order is also to have retrospect to the earliest stages of the war and to be considered as a permanent one"

The first two Purple Heart awards were for valor in battle. The third Purple Heart rewarded a very different kind of service, performed by Sergeant Daniel Bissell through many months, inconspicuously and in secret. In this connection under General Orders of the Continental Army for Sunday, June 8, 1783, there is the following paragraph:

"Serjeant Bissel of the 2^d Connecticut reg^t having performed some important services, within the immediate knowledge of the Commander in chief, in which the fidelity, perseverance, and good sense of the said serjeant Bissel were conspicuously manifested; it is therefore ordered that he be honored with the badge of Merit, he will call at Headquarters on tuesday next for the insignia and certificate to which he is hereby entitled."

The citation begins by stating:

"It hath ever been an established maxim in the American Service that the Road to Glory was open to all."

It has been stated that the road of Daniel Bissell led through extremes of peril, self-sacrifice and the shadows of disgrace.

The award of the Purple Heart was discontinued, however, and when subsequently revived was used as an award for the recognition of wounds received in action against the enemy.

Despite the early recognition in our country's history of the importance of intelligence there has never, until this time been created a decoration solely to reward outstanding performance in the field of intelligence.

It is for this purpose, then that the National Security Medal has been created - to honor service in a field of vital importance to the nation and one in which proper recognition has heretofore been lacking.